

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EURE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01

INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 ACDA-05 TRSE-00 SAI-01 OMB-01 EB-07 SAM-01

IO-10 /081 W

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P R 051828Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7282

INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMEMBASSY ATHENS

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

USMISSION NATO

USNMR SHAPE

USCINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 05711

MILITARY ADDRESSEES ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MPOL, NATO, FR

SUBJECT: FRENCH DEFENSE POLICY

1. SUMMARY: COUNCIL OF MINISTERS MEETING MARCH 4

ANNOUNCED SEVERAL REFORMS IN TERMS OF MILITARY SERVICE

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IN FRANCE. GISCARD COMMENTED ON SUBJECT OF INDEPENDENT

DEFENSE AND NEED FOR SUFFICIENT BUDGETARY RESOURCES TO MAINTAIN THAT DEFENSE. HE WILL ADDRESS SUBJECT OF DEFENSE IN HIS NEXT "FIRESIDE CHAT." GOF ALSO PLANS TO REINFORCE COORDINATING ROLE OF CHIEF OF STAFF OF THE ARMED FORCES. END SUMMARY.

2. FRENCH COUNCIL OF MINISTERS MEETING MARCH 4 EXAMINED DEFENSE ISSUES, AND AGREED THAT SEVERAL STEPS SHOULD BE TAKEN TO IMPROVE MORALE OF FRENCH FORCES. PAY FOR DRAFTEES WILL BE RAISED FROM 75 FRANCS PER MONTH TO 210. ONE FREE TRIP TO THEIR HOME PER MONTH WILL BE OFFERED TO EACH DRAFTEE. DRAFTEES ARE NOT TO BE USED AS "CHEAP MANUAL LABOR." CONSULTATIONS CONCERNING THE IMPROVEMENT OF CONDITIONS WITHIN THE ARMED SERVICES WILL BE ACCELERATED.

3. IN DESCRIBING THESE INNOVATIONS AT THE END OF THE COUNCIL MEETING, THE GOF SPOKESMAN QUOTED FRENCH PRESIDENT GISCARD D'ESTAING AS SAYING "ONE CANNOT ASK THAT FRANCE PROVIDE AN INDEPENDENT DEFENSE, IN PARTICULAR WITH REGARD TO INDEPENDANCE FROM NATO, AND AT THE SAME TIME REFUSE TO VOTE THE RESOURCES NECESSARY FOR THAT DEFENSE AND ATTEMPT TO SAP THE STRENGTH OF THAT DEFENSE. IN THE UNCERTAIN WORLD WHERE WE LIVE, THE GOVERNMENT BELIEVES THAT IT IS INDISPENSABLE THAT FRANCE SHOULD BE ASSURED AN INDEPENDENT DEFENSE. THIS ASSUMES AN EFFORT TO REJUVENATE THE CONCEPTIONS, THE MEANS, AND ALSO THE METHODS OF COMMAND AND OF DISCIPLINE. AT THE SAME TIME, THE MAINTENANCE OF A CONSCRIPT ARMY -- MORE REPUBLICAN AND LESS EXPENSIVE THAN A PROFESSIONAL ARMY -- ASSUMES THAT THE NATURAL AND MORALE CONDITIONS OF MILITARY SERVICE SHOULD BE ADAPTED TO THE PERSONAL NEEDS AND CAPACITIES OF YOUNG FRENCHMEN. THE DECISIONS TAKEN TODAY CONSTITUTE A FIRST GROUP (OF REFORMS). THEY WILL BE FOLLOWED BY OTHERS." THE PRESIDENT SAID THAT HIS NEXT INFORMAL TELEVISED REPORT TO THE PEOPLE WILL CONCERN "THE FUNDAMENTAL IDEAS OF OUR DEFENSE PROBLEM."

4. THE PRESS SPOKESMAN ALSO ANNOUNCED A CHANGE IN THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CHIEFS OF THE MILITARY SERVICES IN PEACETIME. THE CHIEF OF STAFF OF THE ARMED FORCES
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(CURRENTLY GENERAL MAURIN) WILL BE GIVEN A COORDINATING
ROLE IN DRAWING UP THE ARMED FORCES' BUDGETARY NEEDS,
RANKED BY PRIORITY. IN THE PAST, IT WAS LEFT TO EACH
SERVICE CHIEF "TO PREPARE HIS OWN SERVICE FOR COMBAT."

5. COMMENT: THE REFORMS MENTIONED IN PARA 2 ABOVE

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REPRESENT THE FIRST EVIDENCE THAT THE NEW TEAM AT THE DEFENSE MINISTRY (BOURGES/BIGEARD) IS COMING TO GRIPS WITH THE SERIOUS MORALE PROBLEMS THAT BESET FRANCE'S ARMED FORCES. IN THIS CONNECTION, THE EMBASSY IS PREPARING A COMPREHENSIVE AIRGRAM DESCRIBING THE "MALAISE" WITHIN THE FRENCH ARMED FORCES AND POSSIBLE RESPONSES THAT ARE AVAILABLE TO GISCARD'S GOVERNMENT. GISCARD'S PROMISED TV ADDRESS TO THE PEOPLE ON DEFENSE POLICY MENTIONED ABOVE MAY SHED MORE LIGHT ON HIS VIEW OF FRANCE'S "INDEPENDENT DEFENSE" AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO NATO. CHANGE IN PEACETIME RESPONSIBILITIES OF MILITARY CHIEFS SUGGESTS THAT THE CHIEF OF STAFF OF THE ARMED FORCES WILL HAVE AUTHORITY TO EXERCISE TIGHTER, CENTRALIZING CONTROL OVER THE BUDGET REQUESTS OF THE INDIVIDUAL SERVICES. THIS MAY ALSO LEAD TO CLOSER COORDINATION AMONG THE SERVICES, GOING BEYOND BUDGETARY QUESTIONS.
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